

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03763 01 OF 02 080123Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8582
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3763

EXDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJ: LEBANON: NEXT STEPS

1. ESSENTIALITY OF SYRIANS. WE HAVE ALL ACCEPTED AT FACE
VALUE ASSUMPTION THAT PRESENCE OF SYRIANS IS NECESSARY TO
PREVENT OUTBREAK OF WAR BETWEEN MARONITES AND PALESTINIANS.
BY ALL, I MEAN SARKIS AND HOSS AS WELL AS THE REST OF US.
IT IS BARELY POSSIBLE THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY AND THE NON-
SYRIAN UNITS OF THE ADF COULD MAINTAIN A PRECARIOUS SECURITY
IN BEIRUT TEMPORARILY, BUT EVENTUALLY THAT WOULD BREAK DOWN

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UNLESS SOME LARGER FORCE INTERVENED TO REPLACE THE SYRIANS.
THE ABSENCE, OR NON-AVAILABILITY, OF SUCH A FORCE HAS GIVEN
THE SYRIANS A TRUMP CARD WHICH HAS BEEN UNBEATABLE TO DATE.

2. SARKIS HAS ALSO BEEN DOMINATED BY FEARS THAT IF HE ANGERS
THE SYRIANS THEY WILL PULL OUT. THIS HAS REINFORCED HIS
DISPOSITION TO TIMIDITY. ALTHOUGH THE SYRIANS MAKE FREQUENT

REMARKS TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY WILL LEAVE WHENEVER ASKED, ETC., WE WONDER WHETHER THEY WOULD IN FACT DO SO AND WHETHER THERE IS ANY INSULT THAT COULD BE OFFERED TO THEM THAT WOULD MAKE THEM LEAVE.

3. THE SYRIANS ARE TODAY IN THE PROCESS OF IMPOSING A SOLUTION ON LEBANON. THAT SOLUTION CONSISTS OF COERCING SARKIS TO DO SOMETHING DECISIVE ABOUT DISARMING AND CONTROLLING THE PHALANGIST AND CHAMOUNIST EXTREMISTS IN BEIRUT AT LEAST. THEY SYRIANS ARE TO PROVIDE THE MUSCLE TO PERMIT HIM TO DO SO. IF HE IS UNWILLING TO DO IT, OR RESIGNS, THE SYRIANS OBVIOUSLY PLAN TO PUSH AHEAD AND DO IT ON THEIR OWN, WHATEVER THE COST IN INNOCENT LIVES. THE GOL HAS BECOME THE PUPPET OF SYRIA AND ITS GOVERNMENT IS FORCED TO SIT MUTELY AND WATCH THE DESTRUCTION OF ITS MOST AFFLUENT AND PICTURESQUE QUARTER.

4. IF THROUGH PRESSURE OR ISRAELI COUNTERMOVES, THE SYRIANS ARE PERSUADED TO PULL BACK, THEY WILL HAVE LOST THE BATTLE TO THE MARONITES AND THE SITUATION WILL BE, IF ANYTHING, WORSE THAN WHEN IT BEGAN IN TERMS OF NATIONAL UNITY. THE MARONITES WILL NOT FORGIVE THE COMPLACENCY OF WEST BEIRUT MOSLEMS, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, TO THEIR BEING POUNDED IN SUCH BARBARIC FASHION, AND THE PRESSURE FOR PARTITION WILL INCREASE TO THE POINT OF EXECUTION. BASHIR WILL HAVE WON.

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5. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SYRIANS PROCEED WITH THEIR SUPPRESSION OF THE PHALANGE AND DO NOT SIMILARLY SUPPRESS THE ARMED GANGS OF THE PLO AND MURABITUN, THE CHRISTIANS OF EAST BEIRUT ARE GOING TO BE DEFENCELESS. SYRIA IS A MOSLEM POWER, IT CANNOT BE TRUSTED TO DEFEND THE CHRISTIANS, AT LEAST NOT IN THE MINDS OF LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, WHO REMEMBER THE ROLE SYRIA HAS PLAYED IN THE PAST AND FOR WHOM SYRIA'S ACTIONS IN 1976 WERE AN ABERRATION NEVER SATISFACTORILY EXPLAINED OR FULLY ACCEPTED. TO THEM 1976 WAS A MOVE TOWARDS TAKEOVER, AND TODAY'S ACTIONS ARE THE PROOF. ASHRAFIYAH IS THEIR MASADA. FOR THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS IS TO TRANSFORM IT INTO THE WARSAW GHETTO. THEY WOULD PREFER MASADA.

6. MY CONCERN THAT THE NEXT ARAB-ISRAEL WAR MAY BE STARTING IS BASED ON MY BELIEF, WHICH I GATHER TEL AVIV SHARES, THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL NOT STAND BY IDLY INDEFINITELY AND PERMIT THE PHALANGE OR THE CHAMOUNISTS TO BE DESTROYED. AT SOME POINT THEY ARE GOING TO INTERVENT IN SOME FASHION. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW, BUT WOULD EXPECT THEY WILL AT LEAST STEP UP THE FLOW OF WEAPONS AND WOULD ALSO EXPECT THEM TO MOUNT A DIVERSIONARY THREAT SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTH--OR PERHAPS A THREAT AGAINST DAMASCUS, OR SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON.

7. BY ALL EVIDENCE, BOUTROS'S TRIP TO DAMASCUS YESTERDAY WAS A FAILURE AND SO WILL HOSS'S TRIP NOW SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY. HAFEZ AL-ASSAD HAS THE BIT IN HIS TEETH AND APPEARS PREPARED TO TREAT EAST BEIRUT AS TAMERLANE TREATED DAMASCUS, I.E., TO DESTROY IT. LAST NIGHT'S BOMBARDMENT WAS THE SEVEREST TO DATE, AND STARTED AS THOUGH TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH BOUTROS'S RETURN FROM DAMASCUS. THE SIGHT FROM OUR TERRACE WAS WILDLY BEAUTIFUL, AS ROCKETS AND TRACERS FLEW BACK AND FORTH AND FIRES STARTED UP ACROSS HALF THE CITY WHICH WAS BLACKED OUT, WHILE THE MOSLEM HALF TWINKLED AWAY IN APPARENT IF SPURIOUS OBLIVION. THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD START ASKING THEMSELVES (IF THEY HAVE NOT ALREADY) WHETHER THEY MIGHT NOT BE NEXT ON THE LIST, BECAUSE I FEAR WE ARE
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WITNESSING THE IMPOSITION OF SYRIAN HEGEMONY OVER LEBANON. NO LEBANESE GOVERNMENT CAN CLAIM ANY INDEPENDENCE IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, AND MUST RESIGN ITSELF TO BEING A TOOL OF THE SYRIANS OR QUIT, TO BE REPLACED BY SOMEONE ELSE AMENABLE TO HAFEZ AL-ASSAD. WHO THAT MIGHT BE IS UNCLEAR, BUT WHOEVER IT IS, LEBANON WILL HAVE LOST ITS INDEPENDENCE.

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8583

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EXDIS

8. THE QUESTION IS, WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT? IT SEEMS TO
ME WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING CHOICES:

(A) ALERT INACTION. WE FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS, COUNSEL, CALM,
AND LET THE SYRIANS PROCEED TO CLEAN UP. AT LEAST IT WILL
PERMIT RESTORATION OF A DEGREE OF ORDER AND WILL FORCIBLY
PREVENT PARTITION OF LEBANON. A NUMBER OF INNOCENT LIVES
WILL BE LOST, THERE WILL BE GREAT PROPERTY DAMAGE, AND BEIRUT
WILL RISK BECOMING JUST ANOTHER ARAB CITY LIKE DAMASCUS OR
ALEPPO, BUT WITHOUT THE PICTURESQUE QUARTERS THEY HAVE TO
OFFER. MANY OF THE MARONITES AND INDEPENDENT-MINDED CHRIS-
TIAN WILL MIGRATE, SERVICES WILL DETERIORATE, AND ONE WILL
NO LONGER BE ABLE TO GET ANYTHING HE WANTS HERE. IN TERMS
OF US INTERESTS THIS MAY NOT MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE ONE WAY OR
ANOTHER, BUT IT WILL BE SAD.

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(B) WE MAKE A SERIOUS EFFORT TO RESTRAIN THE SYRIANS. WE
USE WHATEVER INFLUENCE WE HAVE, INVOKE THE ISRAELI MENACE
AND, IF IT COMES TO THAT, MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS CONDEMNING
SYRIAN BRUTALITY, ETC. WE DO THIS WHETHER OR NOT SARKIS ASKS
US TO, IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY AND STABILITY IN THE AREA.
INDEED, WE IGNORE SARKIS, AND CONCENTRATE ON STOPPING THE
SYRIANS, WHATEVER HE SAYS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WE COULD GET
THEM TO PULL BACK. THEY MIGHT LEAVE IN DISGUST; THEY WOULD
CERTAINLY FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO OPERATE IN CHRISTIAN
AREAS IN ANY EVENT. WE WOULD EARN THE GRATITUDE OF THE
MARONITES, BUT SARKIS WOULD BE PASSE AND THE BASIC POLITICAL
MUDDLE WOULD REMAIN. PERHAPS FROM IT COULD EMERGE A NEW
PRESIDENT WITH THE COURAGE AND IMAGINATION TO UNITE THE
COUNTRY AND PUT IT BACK ON THE ROAD, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO
HE IS. BRINGING THE PALESTINIANS UNDER CONTROL WOULD BE THE
MAJOR PROBLEM, BUT PERHAPS THAT COULD BE MANAGED IF WE COULD
TALK THE EGYPTIANS INTO REPLACING THE SYRIANS. I KNOW WE
HAVE GOTTEN A NEGATIVE ONCE, BUT WHAT DO WE LOSE BY EXPLOR-
ING THE QUESTION AGAIN?

(C) WE TRY TO ARRANGE A MEDIATION BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND
THE MARONITES AND BETWEEN THE VARIOUS FACTIONS AND THE
MARONITES, PUTTING OUR FULL WEIGHT BEHIND A NATIONAL CON-
SENSUS. WE TELL THE MARONITES TO STOP PLAYING WITH FIRE,

WE PLAY THE ISRAELI MENACE WITH THE SUNNIS AND DURZE, AND WE DRAGOON THE SAUDIS INTO THREATENING TO CUT OFF AID TO SYRIA IF THE SYRIANS DON'T COOPERATE. THIS IS GOING TO TAKE CONSIDERABLY MORE NIMBLE-FOOTED DIPLOMACY THAN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN BEIRUT OR OUR OWN MACHINERY WOULD NORMALLY PERMIT, AND IT IS GOING TO BE PRETTY TOUGH TO PREACH RES- TRAIT TO THE GEMAYELS AND CHAMOUNS AFTER THE POUNDING THEY HAVE SUFFERED, BUT PERHAPS THE DOSE OF GUNPOWDER WILL HAVE
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CHANGED THEIR OUTLOOK. PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS ARE MARGINAL, BECAUSE WE CANNOT TOUCH THE PALESTINE PRESENCE, BUT WE COULD AT LEAST MAKE A TRY.

9. GIVEN MY OWN ATTACHMENT TO AND INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON, IT IS HARD FOR ME TO GIVE A COLD-BLOODED RECOMMENDATION. THE PROBLEM WITH (A), ASIDE FROM THE HUMAN SUFFERING INVOLVED, IS THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL NOT LET IT COME TO FRUITION. WE COULD LET THEM AND THE SYRIANS FIGHT IT OUT AND SEE WHAT EMERGES, BUT WE WOULD RUN GRAVE RISKS OF A LARGER CONFLA- GRATION.

10. MY PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION, IS THAT WE DO SOMETHING TO STOP THE FIGHTING AND WORRY ABOUT SYRIAN REACTIONS LATER. I DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO STAND BY WHILE AN INNOCENT POPULATION IS SUBJECT TO SUCH A SAVAGE APPLICATION OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. WHATEVER THE EVENTUAL CONSEQUENCES IN TERMS OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES, I FEEL WE MUST SPEAK STRONGLY TO THE SYRIANS IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY AND DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO GET THEM TO STOP THE SENSELESS SLAUGHTER. I WOULD THEREFORE RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE (B) OR SOME VARIATION THEREOF.

11. THIS IS PREPARED WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF CONSULTING MY COLLEAGUES IN TOWN AND I HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO REVIEW IT. IT IS A PERSONAL VIEW AND MAY WELL BE AWRY, BUT IT IS HOW I SEE THINGS AS OF 1130 ON JULY 6. THE PAPAL NUNCIO HAS JUST CALLED. HE IS STUCK IN HIS CHANCERY DOWN ON RUE BADARO, WHICH WAS THE SCENE OF SOME OF THE WORST SHELLING LAST NIGHT. HE WANTED TO KNOW HOW WE WERE AND SAID HE COULD NOT GET OUT BUT WAS KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE NEVERTHELESS. AS WE TALKED TWO JETS FLEW OVER AT LOW ALTITUDE AND BROKE THE SOUND BARRIER. I PRESUME THEY WERE ISRAELI. HE PRESUMED THEY WERE THE BEGINNING OF AN AIR RAID AND EXCUSED HIMSELF TO GO TO THE BASEMENT. THIS IS THE ATMOSPHERE WE ARE LIVING IN.
PARKER

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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON: NEXT STEPS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, MOPS, LE
To: STATE NEA
Type: TE
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